

the
defenestrator

issue 37

May 2007



Remembering May 13th, 1985

**On the 22nd Anniversary of
the 1985 massacre, Mumia
and the MOVE 8 both look
forward to some new legal
developments**

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The defenestrator is Philly's sporadic newspaper for resistance, creative revolution and action. To defenestrate Power means total refusal of its tools and tentacles. Like the Hussites who had their oppressors thrown down from the Prague castle into the angry mob below, the defenestrator wrestles power and privilege from its highest and most protected strongholds and casts the beast out of the window and down into the angry hands of the people.

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CIW Wins Again!

ciw celebrates victory while burger king serves up a scamurger with a side of lies

Just days before a major action in Chicago, McDonald's gave in to the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' demands.

The CIW, a community-based worker organization of largely Latin, Haitian and Mayan immigrants working in low-wage jobs throughout Florida, planned to officially announce a boycott of McDonald's in front of the national headquarters just outside of Chicago on April 13. With the good news, the CIW quickly shifted its focus towards their next target: Burger King.

After winning the battle against Taco Bell (the largest purchaser of tomatoes and largest fast food chain) and McDonalds (the most wide spread franchise) it is hard to imagine that Burger King can hold out for too long before caving in.

As in the Taco Bell agreement, McDonald's agreed to pay a penny more per pound for their tomatoes, which doesn't sound like much, and in fact isn't for a giant like McD's, but ends up nearly doubling a tomato picker's pay, from 40-50 cents to 70-80 cents per 32 pound bucket. The original piece rate meant that a worker would have to harvest nearly two and a half tons of tomatoes to earn minimum wage for a ten hour day.

The McDonald's agreement also included provisions for a code of conduct based on the principle of worker participation and the creation of a third party mechanism for monitoring conditions in the fields and investigating worker complaints of abuse.



What's a city park for anyway?

A rally was held yesterday (May 1) in Rittenhouse Square in response to the recent arrest of Anthony Riley for refusal to stop singing in the park on a Tuesday night in March. Riley, a soft-spoken young man who has never had problems singing in the park (or elsewhere - he often plays with his cohort Robby Torres at Suburban Station) before, was, apparently, pretty shocked by the request. After questioning policeman, Greg Wilkinson, as to why he couldn't sing and getting the usual cop response "I am the law here," Riley decided to keep singing and ended up spending the night in the 9th District lock-up, charged with disorderly conduct. Squads of police cars were, of course, called in to make a spectacle of the arrest. Riley kept singing - Sam Cooke's "A Change is Gonna Come" - all the way to the jail. In the City of Philadelphia, for a young black man, his was a bravely cheeky refusal to be silenced. He continued to sing in the jail, and he continued to sing yesterday during the permitted rally. As long as I've lived in the city, people have been singing and playing music in the park; from bagpipers to background music for break-dancers, to classical violinists from the Curtis Institute across the street, to the berimbau players of the capoeira performers. Such live, free entertainment is part of what makes the park a great place to hang on a warm afternoon or evening. According to



the police, square residents are "happy as can be that police are keeping the musicians from disturbing the peace." How they can hear anything in their air-conditioned, vacuum-sealed high-rises is really beyond my scope. It's like the "neighbors" who've gotten basketball courts - in predominately white neighborhoods around the city - to close at night - getting rid of one of the few, free, healthy sources of outdoor evening recreation - because they didn't feel like hearing the balls bouncing at night. The rally challenged the new park policy and encouraged people to, like Riley, keep on singing.

Umoja Village Burns

At approximately 12:30am on April 26, 2007, one of the units in the Umoja Village Shantytown in downtown Miami caught fire from a candle which fell inside. Within moments, the entire Village, built from wooden pallets, was on fire and burned to the ground. Luckily no-one was hurt and residents began rebuilding early the next morning.

Umoja village was started on October 23, 2006, in response to the crisis of gentrification and low-income housing, and the government's policies of assisting the rich at the expense of the poor, when a group called Take Back the Land took control over the publicly owned lot in downtown Miami. Before long, the shantytown was feeding and housing approximately 50 otherwise homeless people. Residents make decisions about their lives and the running of the Village and at least 25 people have been placed into other housing.

According to Take Back the Land: "The fight for the Umoja Village is fundamentally about the fight for control over land in our community. We assert our right to control land in our community, instead of wealthy developers or the elected officials who work for the wealthy developers."



for more info on Umoja Village and info on needed solidarity check out takebacktheland.net

M A Y D A Y around the world

Around the world Mayday is known as International Workers Day, celebrated as a day of solidarity against exploitation and for anti-capitalist resistance. This Mayday saw protests and celebrations across the world. Many in the United States focused on immigrant workers' rights.

The biggest and most successful of these took place in Chicago, where hundreds of thousands took to the streets. Widescale community outrage sparked by the April 25 ICE raid in Little Village boosted turnout expectations, and the final rally site at Daley Plaza was unilaterally moved to Grant Park by police at the 11th hour, despite the vocal objection of sponsoring community groups. Corporate media and police estimates place turnout at 150,000, but Mayday organizers were confident that the final turnout was far higher. Tuesday's Chicago action was boisterous and peaceful — in stark contrast to the police onslaught that marred May Day in Los Angeles.

An otherwise peaceful day of demonstrations for immigrant workers' rights throughout Los Angeles ended violently when the LAPD attacked the May Day march and rally in MacArthur Park. A large rally numbering in the tens of 1,000s was driven from the park and the streets around the park. Families with young children were forced to flee as the police fired hundreds of rounds of rubber bullets and tear gas into the crowd. There are reports of many injuries, including journalists with a TV news crew. Some who have been hospitalized from their injuries. Witnesses report beatings with batons and many injuries from rubber bullets. The first incident of police violence occurred at Wilshire & Parkview when police drove a row of motorcycles head

on into the march. A brief scuffle broke out but the situation was diffused. It was the incident at 7th and Alvarado that sparked the police attack, which resulted in the complete clearing of the park and scattered street fights with police in the neighboring area. In Los Angeles, CA the independent truckers of the Port of Aztlán working with the Industrial Workers of the World closed down their port, striking in support of an ongoing truckers' organizing struggle.

Elsewhere in the world, Iranian workers were also attacked by police. Workers at a government sponsored celebration took over, and started a 7000 strong spontaneous march through Tehran. Police and security forces closed off roads and beat many organizers and participants. In Sanandaj, a Kurdish city in Iran marchers met similar repression.

In Istanbul, Turkey, police arrested around 580 demonstrators after attacking protests commemorating the 30th anniversary of a government May Day massacre. After the attack on the march, the protests turned into riots during which numerous cars were set on fire and police attacked.

Around 200,000 UK civil and public servants across 200 government departments, agencies and non-departmental bodies went on strike for Mayday.

In Italy, half a million people gathered in Rome for an annual holiday rock concert and a further 100,000 waved red flags at a rally in the northern city of Turin.

compiled from indymedia and libcom.org



Cops and FOP harrass Mumia event

A press conference and forum held on Mumia Abu Jamal's 53rd birthday this April 24th at the American Friends Service Committee was the scene of what many felt could have turned into a nasty situation. With Mumia's case seeing possibly its best glimpses of hope opening up in the May 17th hearing (see Hans Bennet's article on page 10), cops across the East coast were breaking a sweat, and expressing their anxiety the only way they know: by intimidating and threatening Mumia supporters. Just weeks before the Philly event, in New York City, the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) alongside of the NYPD hit the Remote Lounge, the venue for "Mumia 911", a NYC Hip Hop event, with 16 citations and a number of threats against the owners. Fearing for his safety, the owner of the club backed out of the event. Simultaneously the Clef Club in Philly, who were scheduled to host Mumia's birthday celebration, received threats after a discussion of the event appeared on Domelights, a pro cop internet forum.

Among those celebrating Mumia's birthday were a number of familiar faces including actor Danny Glover, journalist Linn Washington, Lynn Stewart and poet Sonia Sanchez, but who really stole the show was Sgt. DeLacy Davis a former NJ cop and founder of Black Cops Against

Police Brutality. Davis himself drew serious heat for standing up at a press conference in support of Mumia, including alleged death threats for speaking out at this event.

It wasn't until about 7pm when a Mumia supporter reported a crowd of cops gathering outside of the FOP HQ on Spring Garden. About 20 minutes later, a march of what seemed like about 200 mostly older retired looking FOP members arrived at 15th and Cherry, not looking at all ready to bust heads as some had speculated, the dreary looking cop crowd hovered in front of the Friends Center for tributes to their flag, a moment of silence and were off with little incident. Some five minutes later, a roar of motorcycles filled the air. This time, about 50 scruffy bikers wearing Centurion colors and patches with racist slogans showed up to keep the Civil Affairs officers company. After some taunting on our part, the "Centurions" made off again with little incident. Though the turnout on part of the cops was for the most part without incident, it was also obviously another element of attempted intimidation of Mumia supporters. Philly cops fear the day when Mumia sits in their own justice system with even an inkling of a fair trial. As for us, we're looking forward to chilling with Mumia in Clark Park for his 54th birthday next year.

Da Bottom United

June 23, 2007 will be the beginning of a Movement for Change lead by the people of urban communities. It will be in the form of a Community Awareness Event called "Da Bottom United". The event will be held in the Mantua area of West Philadelphia also known as "Da Bottom." It was created by Vinte Clemmons (ARSIN) and Team United, which is a group of people who represent Da Bottom and call it their home. There will be an all day Festival held at the Mantua Community Center 39th & Mt. Vernon and 39th St Playground 39th & Olive St. There will be numerous highlights to this event such as a Talent Showcase/Concert, Guest Speakers, Pool/Block Party, Drill Steppers, Basket Tournament, Da Bottom T-Shirt giveaway's and many other engaging activities. There will be Social Health organizations as well as Food Venders set up at the Festival. This will be a time for the Hood to party with a purpose! This purpose is to unite the communities and bring awareness about



different issues that affect its inhabitants. Issues being HIV/AIDS, violence, finances, drug abuse and lack community input in neighborhood development. However, this event will have numerous resources that will help combat these issues. "Da Bottom United" is a movement for the people who care about the urban community or call Da Bottom their home. Be there to represent everything we work for as a people, a culture and as a Hood. It is beyond a vision it is a reality!

Eminent Domain in West Phila

by Beth Pulse

Last week my roommate and I were gathering some tires that had been dumped in one of the numerous empty lots that dot N. 40th St. a few blocks from where we live. Not more than a hundred feet from where we worked a crew of city police, License and Inspection officers and municipal waste employees were emptying the contents of a small house and hanging plywood over its windows.

As I wondered what was going on a woman approached my roommate and I and asked if we had any work for her. She was obviously really upset and soon it was revealed that the contents being thrown callously in to the trash truck belonged to her and her 6 year old daughter and the three other tenants of her building. Her name is Mary. She told us that a couple hours earlier license and inspection had come to the house and ordered everyone out. Their landlord had not warned them that the house they rented was slated for eminent domain. Mary told us that she was current on her rent and had all her receipts. As she sobbed in my arms and worried how her six year old daughter would be affected by the loss of her clothes and toys she told us that the officers would not even let her go back inside to get her daughter's birth certificate. One of the workers told her to get into the shelter system, and that was that. We offered to bring her back to our house so she could get some water and maybe make a phone call. On the short ride back she spotted her uncle and got out of the car, relieved to have found a familiar face.

I wondered about Mary over the following weeks. How can the city treat people this way? A few days ago I saw Mary walking by my house. She told me that she got into a shelter and was doing o.k. She had a bundle of wet clothes in her arms that she had trash picked for her daughter and she asked me if I had any quarters so she could wash the clothes.

Stories like Mary's are not uncommon these days around my neighborhood of Mantua and the surrounding neighborhoods of Belmont and Mill Creek. As urban transformation initiatives ruthlessly bulldoze whole blocks and decades of orchestrated disinvestment make possible large neighborhood makeovers; it is really disgusting to see how little this city values its citizens especially its poor communities of color.

I often go to The All For the Taking's website to get updates on the latest news about displaced Philadelphians and new

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legislation. One day I saw a page that

warned of eminent domain in Mill Creek and Belmont. The page provided numerous addresses of homes slated for eminent domain. I printed out the page, made copies and wrote a letter, explaining that I was a concerned neighbor. I also wrote that I was not an expert on eminent domain and I included the Community Leadership Institute's number as a professional resource where people could get help, but I also included my number and encouraged people to call me. I signed the letter "neighbors sticking together" and I passed out these packets to all the addresses listed on the website.

It was a mind-altering experience to see how many houses had already been demolished, I realized my letter was too late. On one block one lone house was left standing, surrounded by a muddy sea of bulldoze tire tracks. We actually met the tenants of this house. Their story was somewhat murky, but they knew they would have to move soon. Despite all this chaos around them they still had to pay rent, but instead of paying their landlord they now had to send their rent checks to the city.

A few weeks later Bill Hamlin, a resident who received my letter called me back. I

didn't really expect to hear from anyone. Talking to Bill was amazing and sad. Bill is a renowned architect who returned to Philly to help his mother. Used to having employment, Bill told me that the strict pay-to-play policy in Philadelphia made it impossible for him to find work. During a long phone conversation Bill told me numerous maddening things.

Only .6% of the architectural contracts in Philly go to African Americans. To add insult to injury while at a Redevelopment Authority meeting where he hoped to procure employment he learned that his aunt's house, where he is currently living, is to be demolished. The city is offering his family \$28,000 for the property. This house is the first house his family owned after slavery. Mr. Hamlin was having difficulty getting answers and information from the city so he started contacting the Federal government.

According to the feds, his family should be getting \$80,000 in compensation for their losses. And we all know that in Philly's escalating housing market \$80,000 is no where enough to rebuild a life in a new neighborhood.

Everyday I ride my bike home north



In the spring and summer a woman is always sitting on the stoop in front of her little blue house. Our relationship began two years ago with a wave and has since developed to include cheerful greetings, comments about the weather and other pleasantries.

So the other day I was riding home, worrying about the escalation of bulldozer activity and saw this woman sitting on her stoop, as is her tradition. I decided instead of simply waving as usual to stop and ask her what was happening with her home. She told me that she owned her home and had paid off the mortgage ten years prior. She said the city told her she had until May 4th to leave and that they were only giving her \$27,000. She looked at me and said, "how can you go anywhere when you have no money, no money. I have this house but I don't got any money."

To find out more, visit: allforthetaking.org

The Community Leadership Institute can be reached at: (215) 634-8450

THE TROJAN HORSE MAKES A COMEBACK

by Richard Rogers

During times of the mayoral election campaign Philadelphia unofficially celebrates the silly season. The question is this: are we really as silly as city council believes us to be? Or just plain dumb? Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, we present you bills nos.060699,060682,and last but not less pernicious bill no. 060683. The reason you 're not thoroughly familiar with these rezoning bills is because city council planned it that way . Why none of the politicians contending for the office of mayor discuss the possibility of a basic change to the the city charter and the conditions under which we live remains a gnawing perplexity. A review of the content of these bills may shed some light on this dilemma.

Bill no. 0606099 has been passed by city council and will be presented as a a ballot question during the primary election in May. "Shall the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter be amended to provide for the creation, appointment, powers and duties of an independent Zoning Code Commission which would recommend amendments to the Philadelphia Zoning Code to make the Code consistent and easy to understand, and to enhance and improve Philadelphia's city planning process while encouraging development and protecting the character of Philadelphia's neighborhoods". Yes, Philadelphia should improve its current Zoning Code. The major flaw in the proposed Zoning Commission is the commission itself. "It would comprise three city officials, two Council members, representatives from four local chambers of commerce, five mayoral appointees, five Council-president appointees and a "community leader"from each of the city's 10 Council districts who would be appointed by their respective

district Council members. The Zoning Code Commission would be chaired by the executive director of the Planning Commission." Have you ever heard the expression"stacked deck?" In any case the projected composition of the new zoning commission is a political solution which is far worse than the existing bewildering complexity individual citizens and neighborhood organizations encounter now. According to the current Zoning Code, any variance (exception to a current zoning standard) granted by the Zoning Adjustment Board must follow a hearing before the aforementioned board and the advanced posting of notices of the hearing throughout the concerned neighborhood is mandatory. That is about to change . With this bill Councilman DiCicco well served the pact of developers whose interests seldom coincide with the ideas and aspirations of the local urban populace. Organized neighborhood resistance to unwanted, uncontrolled, and rampant development by corporate financial interest will endure a tremendous loss. That is the civic crisis lurking within the bowels of this legislative Trojan horse.

Bill no.060682 reads "Shall the Philadelphia Home Rule charter be amended to provide that the six appointed members of the City Planning Commission shall include an architect, an urban planner, a traffic engineer, an attorney experienced in land use issues, and two representatives of Philadelphia community groups that participate in land use issues" Since the City Planning Commission already considers itself above the laws of men(William Kramer, community planner, told me in the past that the City Planning Commission was not constrained by City Ordinances)the true objective of this brain child of Councilmen Kenny and DiCicco may not be immediately apparent . It too will appear as an innocent ballot question on election day in

continued next page

“Hold Up A Minute! It Ain’t ‘Bout Hip-Hop!”

by Robert “Saleem” Holbrook
defenestrator prison correspondent

“One of the greatest roles ever created by Western man has been the role of the Negro. One of the greatest actors to play this role has been the nigger.” - Henry Dumas

So Don Imus got sacked. The grumpy old man who personified the “angry white male” finally got what his hand or rather his mouth, called for. His racist and sexist comments about the women athletes of Rutgers University did not go unchecked despite an intensive “spin” campaign by many of his media colleagues and right wing conservative commentators who wanted to re-direct the focus away from Don Imus’ racist and sexist comments to some of the language that is used in Hip Hop and incredibly, I’m ashamed to say, it almost worked. Talk shows paraded an endless line of Black commentators who started to parrot that black people can’t get upset about Don Imus’ comments when we refer to ourselves and our women in

degrading language in Hip Hop through the use of the term “Bitches” and “Hos” to describe our women and the use of the word “niggah” to define each other. Let it be clear there is no moral equivalence between Don Imus’ visceral racist and sexist comments and the use of degrading words towards Black women and men by ignorant or profit driven Hip Hop artists. Had Imus perceived the women of Rutgers University basketball team as simply rough looking women he could have easily described them as rough looking women. Instead he used terms which carried racial hostility and animus and demonstrated a dislike of both

black women and strong women in general.

Don Imus’ racist and sexist comments came from an ingrained sense of white superiority and black inferiority. Like Michael Richard’s (aka Kramer’s) racist tirade in a comedy club last year, Don Imus’ comments were visceral and were deeply held beliefs and in the case of Don Imus, this was not his first time using a racist term when referring to Black people. The type of comments Don Imus uttered from the same region of the soul that was responsible for hanging Blacks from trees down south and turning loose rabid dogs and racist mobs on Black people marching and struggling to be recognized as humans. A century ago, Don Imus could have conceivably been at the head of a lynch mob terrorizing Black communities or addressing a gathering of the KKK in a southern field at night with an illuminated cross burning in the background.

The use of the term “bitches”, “hos” and “nigga” in Hip Hop is another matter and one in which I am also opposed to however the history behind the use of these terms do not carry the visceral history that accompanied the comments of Imus. These terms, while degrading to women and men of conscience are used by ignorant entertainers and profit driven entertainers. As modern day poets, troubadors and street prophets many of them are speaking the language of the streets and for better or worse, this is the terminology the streets are speaking. While there are some who find affection in calling each other “niggas” I am not one of them and I am opposed to its use

as well as addressing women of color as bitches and hos. As a “brotha off the block”, I’ll admit I occasionally slip up and use the term, particularly when discussing Blacks I believe are sell outs and ventriloquists for white corporate america but I have made a conscious decision to eliminate those words from my vocabulary because they are insulting and degrade our people. The only way to eliminate them is through education and instilling self respect in the youth. We cannot legislate or protest these terms out of existence. The rappers and entertainers who use these self degrading terms are only ignorant “actors” playing out “roles” as-

signed to them by the same type of people, institutions and mindsets that created Don Imus. They are only puppets and one should not attack the puppets to only lose sight of the “puppet-masters”.

After the sacking of Don Imus, members of the CBS corporation and other media commentators called for a campaign against degrading language in the Hip Hop community. Out of the woodwork opportunists are lining up to take shots at the Hip Hop community through boycotts, protests and intimidation tactics. Kind of ironic that CBS corporation and its paid ventriloquists didn’t take on the Mega-Music companies responsible for promoting much of the shallow Hip-Hop that is dominating the airwaves. Corporate music companies that are the reason “bling bling” and “black women” in thongs dominate the Hip Hop biz. Who would they rather have on the airwaves? Idiots extolling materialism or “Dead Prez” and Talib Kweli rapping about revolution, ending poverty, redistributing the wealth, freeing political prisoners, tearing down the prison walls , ending police brutality, empowering youth and women, bringing the troops home from Iraq, building a better educational system, free health care, access to jobs, ending racism, sexism, oppression and painting the White House black, etc. etc. These are real issues. The real issue ain’t Hip Hop. Corporate America ain’t going to cut it’s own hand off, especially not for Black folks.

The attention being focused on Hip Hop in the aftermath of Don Imus’ firing is a diversion from the real issue and a “get back” campaign by right wing conservatives who want us wasting our time fighting Hip Hop and each other instead of fighting the mindset and institutions that enabled Don Imus to remain a fixture on the airwaves in america for over 30 years. That’s the real issue. That is the issue we should be fighting and challenging. Not the Hip Hop community. Don’t fall for the diversion, or in the words of the street commentator Chuck D: Don’t Believe the Hype!

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“the attention being focused on Hip Hop in the aftermath of Don Imus’ firing is a diversion from the real issue and a “get back” campaign by right wing conservatives who want us wasting our time fighting Hip Hop and each other instead of fighting the mindset and institutions that enabled Don Imus to remain a fixture on the airwaves in america for over 30 years.”

May. HOWEVER: “Caveat emptor!” Or “the plot sickens” are two expressions that spring readily to mind as one reads bill no. 060683:

“Shall the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter be amended to provide that the five appointed member of the Zoning Board of Adjustments shall include an architect, an urban planner, a traffic engineer,an attorney experienced in land use issaues and a representative of Philadelphia community groups that participate in land use issues?”

Is this a case of deja vu or is it possible that the Zoning Board of Adjustment membership will be the same as the City Planning Commission (minus one person)? What are the chances of winning an appeal from the same faction that set the same intrusive corporate motion into action?

Please don’t be cynical. Just talk to the smartest guys in the room.

Justice for Erica Keels

On March 22nd of this year, Erica Keels, a 20-yr-old African American trans woman, was fatally run over at Broad and Thompson streets in North Philadelphia. According to witness accounts, the driver in question intentionally ran over Erica four times after ejecting her from his car. A medical examiner’s report supports these accounts.

However, the police have ruled Erica’s death an accident and have refused to conduct an investigation.

The driver, Roland Button, fled the scene but was later apprehended by police. He has yet to face criminal charges, including “hit and run.” When

friends of Erica, who are themselves trans, questioned police officials about the classification of Erica’s death as an “accident,” they were asked to disclose their “birth” names and were told they were “trying to make something out of nothing.”

As community members and allies, we are asking for your support in challenging police injustice by demanding a thorough investigation of the circumstances surrounding Erica’s death.

Our efforts to demand justice for Erica are part of building a larger strategy to address state violence against trans youth of color in Philadelphia.

For more information contact
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Note: this article may be triggering for some people.

“Attention, MOVE:

At the 22nd anniversary of May 13, MOVE

By Hans Bennett

Philadelphia Police Commissioner Sambor declared these words through a loudspeaker, minutes before the May 13, 1985 police assault on the mostly black revolutionary MOVE organization’s home. This assault killed 5 children and 6 adults, including MOVE founder John Africa. After police shot over 10,000 rounds of bullets into their West Philadelphia home, a State Police helicopter dropped a C-4 bomb, illegally supplied by the FBI, on MOVE’s roof. The bomb started a fire that eventually destroyed 60 homes: the entire block of a middle-class black neighborhood. Carrying the young Birdie Africa, the only other survivor, Ramona Africa dodged gunfire and escaped from the fire with permanent burn scars.

Today, Ramona recalls being in the basement with the children when the assault began. “Water started pouring in from the hoses. Then the tear gas came after explosives blew the whole front of the house off. After hearing a lot of gunfire, things became pretty quiet. It was then that they dropped the bomb without any warning.”

“At first, those of us in the basement didn’t realize that the house was on fire because there was so much tear gas that it was hard to recognize smoke. We opened the door and started to yell that we were coming out with the kids. The kids were hollering too. We know they heard us but the instant we were visible in the doorway, they opened fire. You could hear the bullets hitting all around the garage area. They deliberately took aim and shot at us. Anybody can see that their aim, very simply, was to kill MOVE people—not to arrest anybody.”

After surviving the bombing, Ramona was charged with conspiracy, riot, and multiple counts of simple and aggravated assault. Her sentence was 16 months to 7 years, but she served the full 7 years when she was denied parole for not renouncing MOVE. In court, all charges listed on the May 11 arrest warrant, used to justify the assault, were dismissed by the judge. Says Ramona, “This means that they had no valid reason to even be out there, but they did not dismiss the charges placed on me as a result of what happened after they came out.”

Concluding Ramona’s 1986 trial, Judge Stiles explicitly told the jurors not to consider any wrongdoing by police and other government officials, because they

would be held accountable in “other” proceedings. This would never happen, as Ramona explains: “not one single official, police officer, or anybody else has ever been held accountable for the murder of my family.”

“People should not be fooled by this government using words like ‘justice.’ My family members, who were parents of most of those children that were murdered on May 13, have been in prison for almost 30 years to this day, for the accusation of a murder that they didn’t commit, that nobody saw them commit. Meanwhile, the people who murdered their babies are still collecting paychecks, still seen as respectable and never did a day in jail.”

May 13 was the culmination of many years of political repression, but less has been reported of the “MOVE 9”, jointly sentenced in the 1978 killing of Officer James Ramp after a year-long police stakeout of MOVE’s Powelton Village home, whose parole hearings come up in 2008. Ramona Africa explains, “The government came out to Powelton Village in 1978 not to arrest, but to kill. Having failed to do that, my family was unjustly convicted of a murder that the government knows they didn’t commit, and imprisoned them with 30-100 year sentences. Later, when we as a family dared to speak up against this, they came out to our home again and dropped a bomb on us, burned babies alive.”

Origins of the Confrontation

Founded in the early 70’s, MOVE sought to expose and challenge all injustice and abuse of all forms of life, including animals and nature. Along with neighborhood activism, MOVE also organized nonviolent protests at zoos, animal testing facilities, public forums, corporate media outlets and other places.

MOVE’s first conflicts with police began at these nonviolent protests when Mayor Frank Rizzo’s police reacted in their typical brutal fashion. From the beginning, MOVE acted on the principle of self-defense and “met fist with fist.” Ramona Africa explains, “I’m sure the police were outraged that these ‘niggers’ had stood up to them, telling them that they couldn’t come and beat on our men, women, and babies without us defending ourselves. What are people supposed to do? Sit back and take that shit?”

Infamous for his racist brutality as Police Commissioner from 1968-71, Rizzo publicly boasted that his police force would be so repressive that he’d “make Attila the Hun look like a faggot.” He was elected mayor in 1972, with campaign slogans like “Vote White.” By 1979, his police force would become the first PD ever indicted by the federal government for brutality and corruption.

Police attacks on MOVE escalated on May 9, 1974 when two pregnant MOVE women, Janet and Leesing, miscarried after being beaten by police and jailed overnight without food or water. On April 29, 1975, Alberta Africa lost her baby after she was arrested, dragged from a holding cell, held down, and beaten in the stomach and vagina.

On the night of March 18, 1976, seven MOVE prisoners had just been released and were greeting their family in front of their Powelton Village home in West Philadelphia, when police arrived and set upon the crowd. Six MOVE men were arrested and beaten so badly that they suffered fractured skulls, concussions and chipped bones. Janine Africa was thrown to the ground and stomped on while holding her 3-week old Life Africa. The baby’s skull was crushed and Life was dead.

After MOVE notified the media, police publicly claimed that because there was no birth certificate, there was no baby and MOVE was lying. In response, MOVE invited journalists and political figures to their home to view the corpse. Shortly after the attack, Mumia Abu-Jamal interviewed an eyewitness who had watched from directly across the street. “I saw that baby fall,” the old man said. “They were clubbing the mother. I knew the baby was going to get hurt. I even reached for the phone to call the police, before I realized that it was the police. You know what I mean?” The District Attorney’s office declined to prosecute the murder.

The Standoff Begins

In response to the escalated police violence, MOVE staged a major demonstration on May 20, 1977. They took to a large platform in front of their house, with several members holding what appeared to be rifles. MOVE explains that: “We told the cops there wasn’t gonna be any more undercover deaths. This time they better be prepared to murder us in full

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public view ‘cause if they came at us with fists, we were gonna come back at them with fists. If they came at us with clubs, we’d come back at them with clubs, and if they came at us with guns, we’d use guns too. We don’t believe in death-dealing guns. We believe in life, but we knew the cops wouldn’t be too quick to attack us if they had to face the same stuff they dished out so casually on unarmed defenseless folk.”

Speaking through megaphones on the platform, MOVE demanded a release of their political prisoners and an end to violent harassment from the city. Heavily armed police surrounded the house, and a likely police attack was averted when a crowd from the community broke through the police line and stood in front of MOVE’s home to shield the residents from gunfire.

Days later, Judge Lynn Abraham responded by issuing warrants for 11 MOVE members on riot charges and “possession of an instrument of crime.” Police set up a 24-hour watch around MOVE’s house to arrest members leaving the property, a standoff that lasted for almost a year.

Mayor Rizzo escalated the conflict on March 16, 1978, when police sealed off a four-block perimeter around MOVE headquarters, blocking food and shutting off the water supply. Rizzo boasted the blockade “was so tight, a fly couldn’t get through.” Numerous community residents were beaten and arrested when they attempted to deliver food and water to the pregnant women, nursing babies, and children inside.

After the two-month starvation blockade, MOVE and the City came to a fragile agreement under pressure from the federal government. On May 8, 1978, MOVE prisoners were released, and the police searched MOVE’s house for weapons. Police were shocked to find only inoperable dummy firearms and road flares made to look like dynamite. In the agreement, the DA agreed to drop all charges against MOVE and effectively purge MOVE from the court system within 4-6 weeks. In return, MOVE would move out of their home within a 90-day period, while the city assisted them in finding a new location.

Police soon began to modify terms of the agreement, focusing on the alleged 90-day “deadline,” for MOVE to leave their home. MOVE says that the 90-day time period had been described to them as “a

workable timetable for us to relocate,” but “was misrepresented to the media as an absolute deadline. MOVE made it clear to officials that we’d move to other houses but we were keeping our headquarters open as a school.”

At an August 2, 1978 hearing, Judge Fred DiBona ruled that MOVE had violated the deadline and signed arrest warrants that would justify the police siege the following week.

The morning of August 8, hundreds of riot police moved in, bulldozers toppled their fence & outdoor platform, and cranes smashed their home’s windows. Forty-five armed police searched the house and found that MOVE was barricaded in the basement. Police began to flood them out with high-pressure hoses.

Suddenly gunshots fired, likely from a house across the street. Police opened fire on MOVE’s house—using over 2,000 rounds of ammunition. The police and most of the mainstream media would later report that MOVE had fired these first shots. However, KYW Radio reporters John McCullough and Larry Rosen both recalled hearing the first shot come from a house diagonally across the street, where they saw an arm holding a gun out of a third floor window.

The subsequent gunfire was chaotic and Officer James Ramp was fatally wounded in the melee. Three other policemen and several firemen were also hit. A stakeout officer admitted later, under oath, that he had emptied his carbine shooting into the basement, where he heard screaming women and crying children. At a staff meeting days later, a police captain noted “an excessive amount of unnecessary firing on the part of police personnel when there were no targets per se to shoot at.”

When MOVE eventually surrendered and came out of the house, their children were taken and the adults were viciously beaten. Chuck and Mike Africa had been shot in the basement. Live television documented the violent arrest of Delbert Africa. He was smashed in the head with a rifle butt and metal helmet. While on the ground, he was brutally stomped. Twelve MOVE adults were arrested.

At a press conference that afternoon, asked whether this was the last Philadelphia would see of MOVE, Rizzo proclaimed “the only way we’re going to end them is, get that death penalty back, put them in the electric chair, and I’ll pull the

switch.”

Destruction of Evidence

Temple University professor and Philadelphia journalist Linn Washington covered the August 8 confrontation and the trial of the MOVE 9. Interviewed in the recent documentary MOVE, narrated by Howard Zinn, Washington stated that “the police department knows who killed Officer Ramp. It was another police officer, who inadvertently shot the guy. They have fairly substantial evidence that it was a mistake, but again they’ll never admit it. I got this from a number of different sources in the police department, including sources on the SWAT team and sources in ballistics.”

Immediately after the MOVE adults were arrested, Mayor Rizzo ordered the police to bulldoze MOVE’s home by noon that day. Police did nothing to preserve the crime scene, inscribe chalk marks, or measure ballistics angles. In a preliminary hearing on a Motion to Dismiss, MOVE unsuccessfully argued that destroying their home had prevented them from proving that it was physically impossible for MOVE to have shot Ramp. MOVE cited the case of Illinois Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, where the preservation of the crime scene enabled investigators to prove that all the bullet holes in the walls and doors were the result of police gunfire.

The photographic evidence presented in court was also incomplete. Before demolishing MOVE’s house, police did take photos of empty shelves and claimed they had been used to store their guns. However, there were no photos of MOVE pointing or shooting guns from the basement windows, of police removing weapons from the house, or supporting the claim that police removed guns from the mud of the basement floor. To the contrary, a police video viewed in court actually shows then police commissioner Joseph O’Neill passing guns into MOVE’s front basement window. Strongly suggesting the deliberate destruction of evidence, police video footage was also blanked out at the point where Ramp was shot on all three police videotapes presented in court.

Ballistics evidence presented about Officer Ramp’s death is also inconsistent. In the documentary film MOVE, Linn Washington recalls the treatment of evidence at the trial. “They had a big problem with

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Mumia's Oral Arguments Set For May 17

by Hans Bennett

On May 17, the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals will hear oral arguments in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. It will consider four different issues and will then decide to either grant a new trial, affirm the life sentence, or reinstate the death sentence.

Explaining the urgency of organizing for May 17, Pam Africa of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal (ICFFMAJ), says that "Mumia can still be executed. Further, since the Supreme Court is unlikely to hear Mumia's case, this is realistically his last chance to get a new trial. We're asking people to come to Philadelphia and show that the whole world is watching these oral arguments."

"I believe Mumia is innocent and am personally calling for his immediate release," Africa said. "However, I'll work with anyone supporting a fair trial."

Mumia's attorney doubts that his client will appear in court because of a rule that the defendant is not brought in for oral arguments.

The Four Issues

In December, 2005, the 3rd Circuit announced the beginning of deliberations and shocked many by agreeing to consider two claims not "certified for appeal" by federal Judge Yohn in 2001. The courts are now considering the following four issues:

#1. Whether the penalty phase of Mumia's trial violated the legal precedent set by the US Supreme Court's 1988 Mills v. Maryland ruling. This issue was grounds for Yohn's overturning the death sentence in 2001 and is now being appealed by the DA. Yohn ruled that sentencing forms used by jurors and Judge Sabo's instructions to the jury were confusing. Subsequently, jurors mistakenly believed that they had to unanimously agree on any mitigating circumstances in order to be considered as weighing against a death sentence.

#2. "Certified for appeal" by Yohn in 2001, the Batson claim, addresses the prosecution's use of peremptory challenges to exclude Blacks from Mumia's jury. In 1986, the US Supreme Court ruled in Batson v. Kentucky that a defendant deserves a new trial if it can be proved that jurors were excluded on the grounds of race.

At Mumia's trial, Prosecutor McGill used 11 of his 15 peremptory challenges to remove black jurors that were otherwise acceptable. While Philadelphia is 44% black, Abu-Jamal's jury was composed of ten whites and only two blacks. From 1977-1986 when current Pennsylvania governor Ed Rendell was Philadelphia's DA, the evidence of racism is striking: from 1977-86, the Philadelphia DA struck 58% of black jurors, but only 22% of white jurors.

#3. The legality of McGill's statement to the jury minimizing the seriousness of a verdict of guilt: "if you find the Defendant guilty of course there would be appeal after appeal and perhaps there could be a reversal of the case, or whatever, so that may not be final."

In 1986 the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled against McGill in another case (Commonwealth v. Baker) on the same grounds. When Mumia addressed this same issue in his 1989 appeal with the State Supreme Court, the court reversed its decision on the legality of such a statement—ruling against the claim for a mistrial.

Incredibly, just one year later, in the very next case involving this issue (Commonwealth v. Beasley), the State Supreme Court flip-flopped and restored the precedent. However, this would not affect the ruling against Mumia, because the court ruled that this precedent would only apply in "future trials."

#4. The fairness of Mumia's 1995-97 PCRA hearings



when the retired, 74-year-old Judge Sabo was called back specifically for the hearing. Besides the obvious unfairness of recalling the exact same judge to rule on his fairness in the original 1982 trial, his actual PCRA bias has been extensively documented.

During the 1995 hearings, the mainstream Philadelphia Inquirer wrote that the "behavior of the judge...gave the impression, damaging in the extreme, of undue haste and hostility toward the defense's case." Concluding the PCRA hearing, Sabo rejected all evidence and every witness presented by the defense as not being credible. Therefore, Sabo upheld all of the facts and procedures of the original trial as being correct.

For more information, check out mumia.org (Philadelphia), freemumia.com (New York City), freemumia.org (San Francisco), emajonline.com (Educators for Mumia), or Bennett's new series on Mumia: <http://hbjournalist1.googlepages.com/ms>

Graffiti Takes a Hit

by Bronwyn

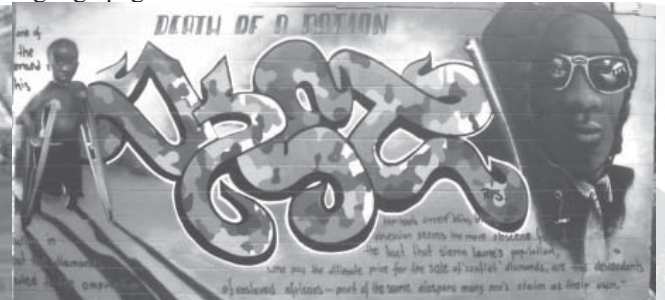
"...it was electric to stand on a subway platform late at night, watching all the trains but yours sail past festooned to the windows and sometimes to the roof with the retina-searing lyrical grind of kids whose big bubbly graffiti names would one day be lost forever..." (artblog)

In the early 80's, studying filmmaking at what was then the Philadelphia College of Art (now U. of Arts) I took a course with documentary filmmaker Manny Kirchheimer. He only had a temporary position, but students loved Kirchheimer, who still lived in N.Y.C.'s Lower East Side and took the train down to Philly twice weekly, because

8 he would talk (and screen) films for hours, with pal-



pable excitement and, unlike most instructors, he'd come to student parties and hang out and take our pot/alcohol addled ideas seriously. A few times we had to hook him up with a sofa or walk him to his train; he'd had such a good time. But when he showed us the film he'd been working on Stations of the Elevated which documented the graffitied IRT subway trains as they exited tunnels against a polluted New York skyline, set to a Charles Mingus' soundtrack, we knew he was cool. The film serves as an elegy to the (soon to be erased) glory of the taggers who stole spray paint, sketched, graphed, risked arrest and persecution, and stayed up all night, creating works of sometimes astonishing beauty and graphic impact. Malcolm Gladwell's 2000 book The Tipping Point highlights the phenomenon's nadir in 70's/80's New York City: "in 1984 every one of the 6, 000 cars in the transit authority fleet with the exception of the midtown shuttle was covered with graffiti." Unlike my teacher, though, he didn't see this as a triumph of "art for art's sake." An



anti-graffitiist, Gladwell theorizes that "winning the battle on graffiti" or addressing the "Broken Window Theory [that] ...if a window is broken [graffiti left up] and left unrepaired, people walking by will conclude that no one cares, is in charge. Soon, more windows will be broken, and the sense of anarchy will spread from the building to the street on which it faces, sending a signal that anything goes" lowered the city's crime rate in the 80's and 90's. Aligning himself, philosophy-wise, with politicians like Rudy Giuliani, and his "clean up the city by any means necessary attitude" and Queens city councilman Peter Vallone, who has made a political career out of his anti-graffiti stance, Gladwell dismisses graffiti as a public nuisance, rather than a voice of the voiceless, a non-commodifiable form of expression and assertion of the self in crowded, often hostile, urban environments. But there is a huge difference between heaving a brick through a window and committing hours of time to create something that, like the much-admired, and simi-

The Children’s Crusade

Militarism, big money and the battle for public education reform in Philadelphia

By eian weissman

In his profile in Governing Magazine, Paul Vallas— who recently resigned from his position as the CEO of the Philadelphia public school system—is portrayed as a sort of Bruce Wayne-like figure. He is a poised, gallant figure, zipping from school to school, politicking and pressing the flesh. A portrait is painted of a steely captain navigating the maze of our massive school system with a glint of patrician sympathy for the poor inner-city children glimmering beneath his commanding demeanor. He’ll conquer this mess with his wits in the boardroom or with bare knuckles in the back alley if necessary.

But a few sentences later, the author makes a few interesting admissions about Vallas:

“He isn’t a professional educator. A longtime state legislative aide and budget director for Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, he took over the job of running the Chicago schools in 1997 after the state put them under Daley’s control.”

“Non-traditional” superintendents have been a familiar story in public education

for quite a while now. During the 1990s, there were brief periods in which big cities seemed enamored of former military officers and retired corporate executives as CEOs for their school systems.”

At first blush—if Paul Vallas’s words are to be taken for granted—everything seems to be on the up and up with the Philadelphia public school system. On closer inspection, everything doesn’t quite add up, and it would seem we are all being taken for a ride. A group of two bit hucksters have sold us on school privatization and militarization, a dose of snake oil. Unfortunately, our children are suffering the consequences of these misguided ventures.

The author of the Vallas profile explains, Vallas “...has grand visions for classrooms crammed with the latest technology, including laptops and “smartboards” that can be written on like regular white boards but double as big-screen computers loaded with teaching tools.”

Interesting that while Vallas was dreamily envisioning a star trek-like techno-paradise for public school-children, under his watch the Chicago public school system was restructured more along the

lines of West Point than the star ship enterprise.

Under the captaincy of Vallas, the JROTC program in Chicago went through a dramatic growth spurt. As Vallas stated while serving as the CEO of Chicago Public schools to PBS News Hour, “I think the military model is beneficial because it places young people in a training environment where academics is not only stressed, but also where discipline is stressed.”

An article entitled Feeding the military machine, by Claire Schaeffer-Duffy, describes Vallas’s initiative to militarize the Chicago Public School system.

While some tout the benefits of the JROTC, especially its injection of structure and discipline into ailing inner city neighborhoods, critics think that the negatives outweigh the supposed benefits:

“They say JROTC’s claim not to be a recruiting tool is a public relations ruse used on school districts, and is not substantiated by internal military communication. For example, an Army regulation states JROTC “should create favorable impressions toward the Armed Services and toward careers in the Armed Forces.”

Now CEO of the Philadelphia public school system, Vallas’s policies have not changed. According to Schaeffer, “Paul Vallas, formerly of Chicago and the new CEO for Philadelphia public schools, had publicly spoken of plans to put JROTC in all neighborhood high schools, increasing

the number of units citywide from eight to 22. As a result of opposition, the school system has since modified this proposal and current plans for high school reform list establishing three military academies and one additional Army JROTC unit.”

The Continuing Appeal of Authoritarianism

Recently I hosted a speaking event for the director of a Philadelphia based network for survivors of torture called The Liberty Center. The director Denise Mitchulka, who worked in the 1980’s in the asylum movement, assisting refugees from the genocidal dirty wars then taking place in Central America spoke of the continuing appeal of militarism and authoritarianism. She explained how, in chaotic social situations, authoritarian leaders capitalize on disorder to gain the trust of a population. When authoritarian regimes gain control of civil societies, they tend to clamp down violently on “criminals” and armed-gangs. In so doing they provide an illusion of order and safety which often appeals to victimized populations. In this way, a militarized education, based on military hierarchy and social organization has a certain appeal to ravaged inner city communities. For the same reasons, the strong-arm rhetoric of school officials sounds pretty nice under certain circumstances.

Schools tend to punish (IE ostracize and expel) the students that most need attention and assistance. This is similar to the way in which penal institutions banish the most marginalized members of society. The

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larly time-consuming, Tibetan sand mandalas, is temporal and offers no material reward.

The recent arrest of 36-year-old Alain Maridueña, aka KET, in March, by the NYPD’s Special Investigations unit, for alleged train/building tagging in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens highlights several key cultural issues in the evolution of graffiti, as well as the repressive extent to which the “state” (police and politicians) will go. Charged with 14 criminal counts, including trespass, criminal mischief and making graffiti, Maridueña, who started tagging as a Brooklyn teenager in the 80’s, travelled across Europe to decorate trains and became such a vital fixture of graffiti culture that he was asked to lecture on the form at several universities, is now an established graphic artist, exhibiting in galleries and designing graphics for Ecko clothing, Moët and Chandon cham-

pagne and MTV, faces decades in prison. Last October, the NYPD, granted a search warrant, seized “evidence” – spray paint cans, nozzles, markers, marijuana and brass knuckles, along with computer files - from Maridueña’s upper Manhattan apartment. Such an arrest is unprecedented as he was never actually caught in the act (he has no previous criminal record); instead, the case rests on what prosecutors describe as “the unmistakable detail of his graffiti signature – his ‘KET’ tag – and the fact that the tag is visible on photographs of illegal subway graffiti that were entered into Maridueña’s home computer only hours after identical work was discovered on subway cars” (NYT’s 19 April 2007). Similar circumstantial evidence has been/is being used to convict environmental/animal rights activists, who also face years in prison. Maridueña’s link to Mark Ecko, who raised controversy in the city in 2005 when he held a block party to promote

a new graffiti video game (which Maridueña helped design – players roam a city landscape, tagging) in which party-goers spray-painted cut-out subway trains, is also viewed as incriminating (councilman Vallone tried to block the event and has pushed for stiffened penalties on tagging). According to the Times article “there is no clear precedent for this type of prosecution of graffiti vandalism.”

Grffiti, like hip-hop/rap, has been vilified in the media and blamed for all sorts of aberrant behaviors, but it also became a global phenomenon that, like everything else in a commodifying culture, once recognized as profitable/marketable, is exploited by corporations (sometimes with the complicity of the artists themselves – but as with Rap it’s complicated). Some see Maridueña, like Obey’s Sheperd **continued next page**

Autonomous Communities

by dave onion

The aspiration for autonomy is above all the struggle against political and moral alienation from life and work - against the functionalization of outside interests, against the internalization of the morals of our foes ... This aspiration is concretized when houses are squatted to live humanely or not to have to pay high rents, when workers call in sick in order to party because they can't take the alienation at work, when unemployed people plunder supermarkets ... because they don't agree with absurd demands of unions for more jobs that only integrate people into oppression and exploitation. Everywhere that people begin to sabotage, to change the political, moral and technical structures of domination is a step toward a self-determined life.

from a 1983 meeting of Autonomi in Hamburg

Back in the day, LAVA, the space where defenestrator keeps its office chose to call itself the Lancaster Avenue Autonomous space. At the time the name LAVA and the autonomous label seemed like a good fit. To some of us it contained enough meaning to show our general political motivations, while being inclusive enough to

allow for a pretty wide spectrum of voices and ways. But after having to explain the meaning of that word over and over again to people who've come in to visit the space, it became apparent that even many who were members of the groups using the space probably couldn't explain why we were called that or where our name even came from. So it seemed like we needed to maybe revisit what that second A in LAVA was all about. ...

Autonomy as a movement seems to first have developed out of study groups inside of the the Italian labour movement. Groups like Potere Operaio (Workers' Power), Lotta Continua (the Struggle Continues) and later Autonomia Operaia (Workers' Autonomy) began challenging the role labor unions and political parties had in revolutionary struggle, rejecting some of the institutional and hierarchical Communist ideas at the time in favor of a horizontal, radically democratic form of struggle. Before long this translated into combative worker run organizations in car factories and subsequent wildcat strikes outside of union control. Their ideas often directly clashed with the Leninist dominated paths many anti-capitalist radicals were taking at the time. These groups and the larger social movement from which they sprang became loosely known as Autonomia (or Autonomy in English).

Theoretically, these autonomous thinkers also dug much deeper than many others on the left. Autonomous groups that began

in factories looked at the dehumanizing aspects of commodity society and work itself. Essentially, what made up autonomous politics was a rejection of capitalist logic (like working for wages, private property etc.) and a rejection of hierarchical institutions including those on the left. The bulk of politics developed out of lived experience and experiments in how to live outside of and fight powers of capitalism. Folks began attacking ideas of private property and waged work itself, which eventually inspired takeovers of abandoned buildings in Italy's big cities - both for living spaces and to create spaces where autonomous politics and ways of being could flourish.

And flourish they did. Squatted social centers popped up across Italy, and then the rest of Europe, transforming abandoned industrial spaces and housing into vibrant rebel social centers. Between 1969 and 1975 some 20000 buildings were squatted in Italy as part of this movement. Just after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, squatters who had already been active in the West took over hundreds of abandoned buildings on the East Side, also creating free social spaces by the hundreds. Evictions and attacks on the squats were met with riots and attacks on capital, targets including supermarkets, shopping centers, offices of developers and speculators, and always police. Across Western Europe, the politics in these spaces usually spelled out a distinct alternative to the Cold War binary politics that were prevalent. In

most of these spaces decisions and work are carried out explicitly without bosses or leaders.

In the mainstream media across Europe, Autonomy was often smeared as violent or sometimes terroristic. Squatters often took on police in street battles defending houses from eviction, or defending themselves from police attacks during demonstrations. Guerilla struggles in the global south were definitely an influence tactically at least, but the autonomous riots, defense of spaces, and attacks against capitalist institutions using weapons like molotov cocktails and rocks though hardly non-violent were always a far cry from the armed struggles of the day. And even the armed actions of the left never could compare to the violence of the state whether in the form of police repression or the economic devastation that it feeds off.

Autonomy isn't by any means a European phenomenon. Shortly after the EZLN (Zapatista Army for Nation Liberation) an army of mostly poor indigenous Mexicans, took over San Cristobal, Chiapas' City Hall in 1994, the declarations and work which followed the initial government massacres in the South of Mexico had a distinctly different quality. As some of the most influential Latin American guerilla movements were well on their way out, the Zapatistas were talking about horizontal structures, production collectives, autonomous education and seized



Fairey, who has become fairly wealthy and markets his work on-line, but who also employs and supports lots of young artists, as a "sell-out." Others have said he should have known better: subway-graffiti is dead/too risky. But Maridueña has always actively taken part in discussing and dissecting the values of urban street culture. In a roundtable discussion "Soul for Sale" with other graffiti notables such as Cristina Veron who has traveled and written extensively on global graffiti and hip-hop culture, Maridueña stuck to his roots: "Why aren't the real stories of what is happening in urban America at the forefront? I'll tell you why: it ruffles too many feathers."

German director, and former graffiti/stencil artist Florian Gaag's feature film Wholetrain (2006) - wholetrain refers to the covering/tagging of the entire length of the subway car - was shown at the Philadelphia Film Festival (the director, who held a Q and A after the screening, has had some difficulties with theatrical releases in the U.S. but **1 0** says a DVD should be available in the fall - check

out www.wholetrain.com) a few weeks ago and depicts the travails of a group of young German taggers who face criminal prosecution and constant police harassment and are struggling with the responsibilities of adulthood (children, funds, health care) and the desire to keep painting (the main character, on probation and headed to jail next time he gets caught, interviews for a university job as a graphic's teaching assistant at the suggestion of his probation officer). No doubt Fairey and Maridueña struggled with similar issues, though both continued their street art while making a career/business out of it. Most people aren't criticized for getting paid for what they're good at. In her writing, Veron has described how graffiti/hip-hop artists in "third world" cultures are both less aided and less hindered by the corporate dictates of U.S. culture, and can exist outside the spaces of capitalism because, so far, it ignores them. Underground purity is a harder gig to maintain here. The film ends with a "fuck you" to the system, a refusal to submit/obey, and maybe

that's how Maridueña still felt, despite, or even because of, the risks. In the 1980's the New York Transit Authority brought in consultants to "handle" the graffiti situation. A new subway director, David Gunn, was brought in to oversee the systems rebuilding. Gladwell interviewed him for his book: "'We had a yard up in Harlem,' he proudly tells him. '...where the trains would lay up over night. The kids would come the first night and paint the side of the train white. Then they would come the next night, after it was dry and draw the outline. Then they would come the third night and color it in. It was a three-day job. We knew the kids would be working on one of the dirty trains, and what we would do is wait for them to finish their mural. Then we'd walk over with rollers and paint it over.'" If Maridueña is convicted it will send a similar chill, the chill of erasure, of criminalizing expression, just as the repression of those voicing discontent with the plunder of the environment has tried to silence dissent and the ruffling of feathers. ■



large swaths of hoarded land from landowners. Though identifying as autonomous, the bulk of Zapatista ideas were not eurocentric but had roots in indigenous “ways and customs”: forms of direct democracy which had been integral to Mayan life for centuries predating any European contact.

And immediacy is important here too. Along with demands for Indigenous Rights from the government, from the start the rebel communities re-organized their lives to be revolutionary and egalitarian and continue to do so. Co-operative farming and other economic work have been a big part of the work as has taking back the political space where these transformations could happen.

The uprising in southern Mexico helped reinvigorate and enrich movements around the world. Notably, a couple years after the uprising, the Zapatistas hosted the “National Democratic Convention” (or CND), a gathering of thousands of organizers and organizations from across the left, to gather ideas on how to move forward. Out of the CND was born, among other projects, “People’s Global Action”, a global co-ordination of radical social movements, grassroots campaigns and direct actions. It was the PGA who put out the initial calls for the global days of action that reinvigorated the North American anti-capitalist movement, notably in November of 99 when massive direct actions disrupted World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle and gave strength and inspiration to anti-capitalist struggles around the world.

If the more recent uprising and subsequent repression in Oaxaca seemed influenced by the Zapatistas one state over, it’s because it was. The Oaxacan People’s Popular Assembly (APPO) also pulled direct action, grassroots direct democracy and rejection of political parties to the center of their struggle. Like the Zapatistas, the Oaxacan struggles also had a strong internal indigenous element informing it politics from the beginning.

Further south, we find active autonomous groups in Venezuelan shanty towns around Caracas, thousands of families claiming land and the political space that comes along with it across Brazil, in Argentina’s occupied factories, unemployed workers groups and neighborhood assemblies. In India groups like the Karnataka State Farmers Association who have destroyed genetically modified crops and the Narmada Bachao Andolan who’ve resisted dams being built on their land are just a few more examples of such movements.

Theoretically, autonomy has often been expressed as a healthy mix of anarchism and marxism, drawing the best from each, ditching authoritarian or dogmatic strains, but learning mostly from applying an anti-capitalist desire for freedom to life directly. And though the learning experiences that have come from squatting, the social centers, building non-capitalist alternative economies and from direct actions of various scopes have been a tremendous learning experience stretching over decades, autonomy has also had some thinkers who’ve shaken up radical theory. Toni Negri took on the rigid communist parties of Italy and, together with Michael Hardt, shook up discussions on class and globalization over the last few years. Sylvia Frederici of the Midnight Notes Collective has shared invaluable insights into women’s unacknowledged exploitation by capitalism. The EZLN’s Subcommander Marcos and his sidekick the beetle Durito brought indigenous democracy into the foreground of rebel movements around

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Guinea, General Strike

by Fred Jones

The aluminum tubing for your bike’s frame and wheels is made from an ore called bauxite, which was likely mined in Guinea, in central, west Africa. Guinea is the world’s largest producer of bauxite, just ahead of Brazil and Jamaica, according to the bauxite page on wikipedia. Guinea is said to possess one third of all the bauxite in the world and bauxite is its number one export.

Guinea’s story is told all too often: in order to make money on aluminum, a company like aluminum giant Reynolds, say, has to acquire bauxite ore as cheaply as possible. This, of course, requires that bauxite miners are paid as little as possible - therefore, there is no tax base - and World Bank and IMF loans virtually guarantee there will be no development of infrastructures like clean water, health care, schools and electricity. At some point, the miners become fed up with their exploitation and complain, strike and sometimes, even riot. The police and military are called out to quiet things down, maybe even kill some people. Every capitalist knows this, so much so that strikes, riots and their quelling are fully a part of the global capitalist economic system.

But from another perspective, these are the very reasons why capitalism must be abolished as quickly as possible. Its viciousness, which it always tries to deny and hide, is its primary characteristic. Capitalism creates and distributes its gulags and work camps (also called “third-world nations”) while trying to get “first-world” consumers to forget that people’s lives are at stake. In this view, the world’s distribution of medicines and clean water - controlled primarily by banks and pharmaceutical companies through which at least 14 million people die a year from treatable illnesses - can only be called genocide. From this point of view, Guinea’s resistance to capital is different than capitalism’s ‘business as usual’, strike – counterstrike. The average age of a Guinean is seventeen, whereas in the United States, it is thirty-five. These Guineans grew up without the promises of the socialism of Guinea’s first president, Ahmed Sekou Toure, (1958-1983) and have lived through the worst of neoliberal policies under its corrupt, present leader, Lansana Conte, who came to power in a military coup in 1984. In an interview for the UN Office of Humanitarian Affairs (www.irinnet.org), one youth explained how he and his friends had absolutely no hope for the future and had decided to rebel.

From other reports, the three week general strike in January, 2007, came on the heels of protests and riots beginning in April of 2006. Union workers, civil servants, students and small business-people took to the streets and shut down the capital, Conakry and several

other cities a dozen times throughout the year. As Conte agreed to appoint a Prime Minister (a seat which he himself dissolved), riots and protests broke out again in March of this year, until an acceptable representative could be chosen.

The Conte government was not completely overthrown, but Guineans came close, as radio, TV and Internet stations were shut down and more than 120 people were killed before the unions relented to the government agreement. The new Prime Minister, Lansana Kouyate has agreed to review all mining contracts and to reduce the costs of rice and gasoline for the general public. It is still an open question as to whether the past year is a gain which can be built upon by young Guineans.

In some ways, it is a shame to see how badly things have devolved from the rhetorical Pan-Africanism of Guinea’s first president, Ahmed Sekou Toure. Guinea was the first African nation to declare independence, in 1958 - from its French colonizers - a fact for which it was economically punished for nearly seventeen years by France and its allies. Toure, and then president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah who had written extensively about African revolution and solidarity, formed the A-APRP (the All-African People’s Revolutionary Party) which still exists today. As the history books are yet being written, it appears that (in a fashion similar to the repression of the Black Panthers in the United States by the FBI) the CIA had a hand in the overthrow of both presidents. And yet, mistakes of a top-down kind were already being made in both Guinea and Ghana, as both presidents silenced dissidents, while imprisoning protesters and strikers. Both presidents were proponents of a kind of hierarchical socialism which became totalitarian. Still, with all its problems, it is sad to see this kind of discourse devolve into genocidal capitalism.

That Guinea is purportedly an 85% Muslim religious country, seems to have had little effect on its people’s ability to raise hell and to riot. Here one can wonder if “going all the way” politically means for Guineans, to have a theocracy, but with a second look, Guinea’s unions appear too strong to allow such. Here’s hoping they’ll build on the gains of this year while finding allies in Argentina, Ecuador and who knows, maybe even Venezuela.

At the same time, we’re supposed to be concerned with the state of Guinea’s civil society, its institutions and unions in their ability to ‘represent’ their people. This is where things start to get difficult, as we know those institutions are hierarchical as well, and “totalitarianism by representation” (as we know all too well, here in the USA) is still totalitarianism.



Prisoners Fight Exploitation by Keefe Commissary at SCI Houtzdale

by Sadot Williams

Coming up the first of the year I had sent in an article to the Coalition for Prisoners' Rights newsletter in Santa Fe, NM to be listed letting prisoners in PA state prison know that Keefe Corp. had set up a CI- (Correctional Industry) distribution center here at SCI-Houtzdale using prisoner labor at 19¢ per hour for 6 hours max a day to pre-package all commissary orders for prisons in the western region of the state. As of now 3 prisons here in the western region get there commissary shipped to them pre-packaged from Houtzdale SCI-Cresson, SCI Pine Grove and SCI-Laure Highlands with more prisons to come on line in the coming months.

Also in the letter I broke down how the prisoners had to fill out their order forms 10-12 days ahead of time, and how the PA Department of Corrections and Keefe Corp had setup a take it or leave it policy with all orders.

Say you ordered one tube of toothpaste but when you get your bag, you have three tubes and were charged for all three, you either have to take the whole order or send everything back. Then I broke down how if from the time you turn in your order sheet 10-12 days ahead of time, you no longer wish to sign for that order, they kept your bag and gave it to their snitches (rats) and did not put your money back on your account.

Myself and a few other prisoners were getting everyone to put in DC-804's (Inmate Grievances) and had them write to the DOC's central office and send letters to the PA State reps/senators.

With all of this taking place, they did stop making us take orders that we can "prove" were overcharged. Now they will delete all extra items. But if you do not go to Commissary and pick up and sign for your order they are still keeping it and not putting your money back on your account. Also here at SCI- Houtzdale right after all this took place they started not putting your beginning or ending account balance

12

on your sales receipt slip. So now

you are spending your money blindly. I guess that's payback.

Now myself and a few other prisoners were in the yard everyday talking to prisoners telling them to stop spending money with Keefe and if it's a must that they do- spend as little as possible.

Here in PA state prisons under Keefe Corp we keep seeing the selection of items grow smaller and prices keep going up. We can no longer shop around for the best price on a TV, radio, sneakers, boots or type writers from outside vendors. PA DOC has a policy if an item is sold on commissary you cannot buy it from anywhere else.

And our efforts were paying off! About 15-20 prisoners were going to commissary out of 120 on a unit. Then the corrections officers (CO's) stopped the block workers from giving out the commissary slips and on every block the CO's started doing it themselves and making a list of who goes to commissary and who doesn't.

Keep in mind that a prison that holds 1800-2000 prisoners and with 500-600 of them being informants for the administration it was not long before someone pointed a finger at me as being one of the head insurgents.

And that is when my personal harassment by the CO's that lead to me being physically assaulted by them and sent to the R-H-UL5 (Hole) for the next 90 days on fabricated charges that other prisoners do not go to the hole for- they get 15-30 days cell restriction for the same charges of refusing to obey an order and using abusive, obscene or inappropriate language to an employee.

In Closing, my first and foremost objective is to leave prison and go be an asset to my family and community as soon as possible. However, a lot of sacrifice was made by brothers and sisters so that when I came to prison a little over 10 years ago I could use the phone, law library, eat hot food and much more! And I understand fully that the PA DOC still have on lock

down some of these same brothers and sisters. And there are a lot of people on the outside fighting for us in here, as well. How can I not try fighting for myself? So when I get out of the hole, I'm continuing this epic saga.

Keefe Commissary: (800)-831-1728
SCI Houtzdale: (814) 378-1000

Russel Shoatz Medical Update

Maroon Shoatz Recieves Medical Attention New Afrikan Political Prisoner/POW Russell "Maroon" Shoatz suffered from chest pains for weeks while prison officials repeatedly ignored his demands for appropriate medical attention. On April 26 outside pressure at last forced SCI Greene to allow him to see a heart specialist. An echocardiograph test did not show any problems. Medical staff at Greene attributes the pains and other symptoms to angina, which they believe to be controllable by a change in diet, a daily dose of aspirin and, in the case of an emergency, nitroglycerin tablets. Letters and phone calls on Maroon's behalf made all the difference in this situation; another person incarcerated at SCI Greene waited 2 years for similar tests. SCI Greene and prisons throughout Pennsylvania need to get a message that Maroon receiving these tests does not mean that we have stopped paying attention. Medical neglect of this kind is immoral and unacceptable. Consider writing to Maroon or joining the Human Rights Coalition's Stop the Abuse campaign to talk about ways to keep making positive change.

Russell Maroon Shoatz
AF-3855
175 Progress Drive
Waynesburg, PA 15370
Human Rights Coalition
info@hrcoalition.
org www.hrcoalition.
org

Prisoners Riot in Indiana Private Prison

Inmates rioted at a prison near New Castle, Indiana on Tuesday afternoon, setting at least one fire in the prison yard and prompting the state to mobilize emergency squads. A group of prisoners brought in from Arizona were believed to have started the disturbance at about 2 p.m. at the New Castle Correctional Facility. According to prison staff contacted by cell phone, many of the Arizona inmates have been dissatisfied with circumstances there. New Castle is privately operated by the GEO Group, which also manages a federal detention facility in downtown San Diego. California has contracted with the GEO Group to imprison over 1000 inmates from its overcrowded facilities at New Castle (which is now also overcrowded).



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Eric McDavid, the Green Scare and COINTELPRO

by colin cascia

It’s not the enormous gaps in the federal case against Eric McDavid, based solely on testimony from paid informant Anna Davies that scares me. Nor is it the cooperation of two of his friends with the prosecutor that I find the most disturbing in this Green Scare indictment. The real frightening part of the “Green Scare” is the striking similarities to COINTELPRO.

Something Maroon Shoatz demonstrates in his pamphlet “Freedom or Slavery: Liberation or Gangsterism” is how the feds used a number of tactics to destroy the Black Liberation movement, one of them being what he calls, “separation from the most advanced elements.” This means cutting off the more revolutionary groups, who were willing to participate in armed struggle and the popular mass movements that could be defused by reformist tactics.

Maroon, a warrior in the Black Liberation Army, was one of these “advanced elements,” who, after being arrested for allegedly shooting a police officer in an armed action, escaped from prison twice, and is no stranger to armed struggle or to COINTELPRO.

The FBI has used this same tactic in the Green Scare, targeting people who are (or in Eric’s case, accused of thinking about) using violent or destructive measures against the state. In the case of the Green Scare defendants, the feds have chosen a group that they consider to have the least community support and are the most isolated from a larger movement to use as civil liberty guinea pigs.

Something I take issue with in some of the things I’ve read about the Green Scare is that some writers place the defendants in the center of the state’s focus and view the state’s action against them as an end in of itself.

I see the Green Scare as the government sort of “testing the waters” to see what they can get away with and the first step in a series of actions that will become increasingly invasive, brutal and fascistic.

This being said, I support the Green Scare defendants not because I necessarily fall in line with their theories or politics (besides riding a bike, I’m a pretty shitty environmentalist) but because their freedom, or the denial of their freedom is all of ours.



Background:

Eric McDavid was arrested in Auburn, CA on January 13, 2006 as part of the government’s ongoing Green Scare campaign. He now faces two decades in prison. Eric has been held in solitary confinement at the Sacramento County Main Jail since the day of his arrest. He and two others were charged with “conspiracy to destroy property by means of fire or explosives.” The government’s case is based on the word of a single FBI informant who was paid over \$75,000 to fabricate a crime and implicate the trio. Both of Eric’s co-defendants have since caved under

the threat of being imprisoned for 20 years and plead guilty to a lesser charge. In doing so, they also agreed to testify against Eric and cooperate in every way possible, including testifying in front of secret grand jury proceedings. Eric has been repeatedly denied bail. For over a year, he has only been allowed to leave his cell for a few hours per week and receives very little contact with the outside world. On Monday, April 23, Eric finally had his hearing on the remaining defense motions. There were 21 motions heard on a variety of issues, including a number on 1st and 4th Amendment violations. Judge England made it through all 21 motions in less than 2 hours, systematically denying each and every one of them. He seemed to be very familiar with the government’s arguments and agree with them.

(from supporteric.org)

Eric McDavid’s court date is steadily approaching, July second, and after serving 14 months in jail without a trial (his hearing was just held on April 23) he still needs to raise \$8000 to cover legal costs. Sacramento Prisoner Support has been diligently keeping people updated to his situation and asking that people show support by holding fundraisers or making personal contributions.

For more info, visit: supporteric.org

Eric’s mailing address:

MCDavid, ERIC X-2972521 4E231A
Sacramento County Main Jail
651 “T” Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

And meanwhile in Greece..



prison bedsheets burning during a solidarity demo

On April 23rd, prisoners at the prison of Malandrino in Fokida, mainland Greece, began a revolt. The spark igniting the revolt was the beating of anarchist prisoner Yiannis Dimitrakis as well as the vicious, violent response of the guards to the protests staged by his co-prisoners. Disgraceful holding conditions, lack of water, regular beatings, electronic surveillance and the extremely short times allowed at the yard comprise a grim reality for the Malandrino prisoners. The prison has seen plenty of revolts in the past...By nightfall the prisoners were in full control of the prison. Resistance quickly spread other prisons in Greece,



Greek cop cars chilling after a hot night

and solidarity actions have been plentiful: By 1:30am on the 24th, 120 strong motorcycle demo reached the Diavata Prison, around eight kilometres outside the city of Thessaloniki. The demonstrators and the prisoners chanted slogans together while the prisoners threw burning blankets out of the building.

On April 26, 40-50 people attacked and burned the building’s guard-house and at least seven police

cars, as well as a few motorbikes. Earlier in the day another group had thrown molotov cocktails against the headquarters of the riot police in Zografou, Athens. A day before, a series of buildings around the Exarcheia district of Athens were attacked in solidarity with the prisoners. Buildings included the offices of two ministers (one being the minister of justice).

for more info, see : athens.indymedia.org/?lang=en 1 3

MOVE

continued from page 7

the authenticity and thus the validity of the medical examiner's report. The prosecutor took out a pencil and erased items in the report that he didn't like. Now MOVE was objecting and the judge was saying 'sit down and shut up' and allowed the guy to do that."

On Aug. 8, The Philadelphia Bulletin reported that Ramp had been "shot in the back of the head according to the police log." The next day, the Daily News instead reported that the bullet head entered his throat at a downward trajectory in the direction towards his heart. Later, in court, the prosecution's medical examiner, Dr. Marvin Aronson testified that the bullet entered his "chest from in front and coursed horizontally without deviation up or down."

In their recent newsletter, MOVE argues that if they had shot from the basement, the bullet would have been coming at an "upward" trajectory instead of the "horizontal" and "downward" accounts that had been presented. This crucial point aside, it would have been essentially impossible to take a clean shot at that time. The water in the basement, estimated more than 7 feet deep, forced the adults to hold up children and animals to prevent them from drowning. "The water pressure was so powerful it was picking up 6 foot long railroad ties (beams that were part of our fence) and throwing them through the basement windows in on us. There's no way anybody could have stood up against this type of water pressure, debris, and shoot a gun, or aim to kill somebody."

On May 4, 1980, Janine, Debbie, Janet, Merle, Delbert, Mike, Phil, Eddie and Chuck Africa were convicted of 3rd degree murder, conspiracy and multiple counts of attempted murder and aggravated assault. Each was given a sentence of 30-100 years. Two other people denounced MOVE and were released. Consuela Africa was tried separately because the prosecutor found no evidence that she was a MOVE member.

Mumia Abu-Jamal writes that the MOVE 9 "were convicted of being united, not in crime, but in rebellion against the system and in resistance to the armed assaults of the state. They were convicted of being MOVE members."

When Judge Malmed was a guest a few days later on a talk radio show, Abu-Jamal called in and asked him who killed Ramp. The Judge admitted, "I have absolutely no idea" and explained that since MOVE called itself a family, he sentenced them

as such.

Preparing for 2008 Parole Hearing

Mike Africa, Jr. wants his parents to come home. The son of MOVE 9 prisoners Mike and Debbie, Mike Jr. was born in prison just weeks after his mother had withstood police gunfire and a vicious beating on Aug. 8, 1978. Today, Mike Jr. explains that growing up without parents is "very hard. It's like missing part of yourself. The system separated MOVE people like they did because they know it's hard to deal with being separated from your family."

August 2008 will mark the 30th year of the MOVE 9's imprisonment, and they will be eligible for parole for the first time. MOVE has begun to organize and raise public support for their release. Ramona Africa is particularly concerned about two possible clauses that can be implemented to deny parole.

First is the "taking responsibility" clause, which basically demands a prisoner admit guilt. "That is not acceptable, because it is patently illegal. If a person was convicted in court, to then demand that they admit guilt -- even when they are maintaining their innocence, as the MOVE 9 are -- is ridiculous. The only issue for parole should be issues of misconduct in prison that could indicate one's not ready for parole. Other than that, an inmate should be paroled," explains Ramona.

Second is the "serious nature of offense" clause. "This is patently illegal too because the judge took this into consideration and when the sentence was issued, it meant that barring any misconduct, problems, new charges, etc. this prisoner was to be released on their minimum. To deny that is basically a re-sentence. We're dealing with these issues because when our family comes up for parole, we don't want to hear this nonsense." MOVE is planning a conference May 12, and later in August, dealing with this issue of parole for political prisoners.

The 1978 and 1985 police destruction of MOVE's homes; the arrest and capital sentence of Mumia Abu-Jamal, who covered the MOVE conflicts; the 1998 death of Merle Africa in prison; and the 2002 custody battle over Zachary Gilbride Africa are only a few examples of MOVE's long history of confrontation. This tradition is best summed up by MOVE's founder in his 1981 speech before he was acquitted of federal weapons charges in the famous criminal trial, "John Africa vs. The System":

"It is past time for all poor people to release themselves from the deceptive strangulation of society... This system has failed you yesterday, failed you today, and has created conditions for failure tomorrow, for society is wrong, the system is reeling, the courts of this complex are filled with imbalance. Cops are insane, the judges enslaving, the lawyers are just as the judges they confront. ... trained by

the system to be as the system, to do for the system, exploit with the system, and MOVE ain't gonna close our eyes to this monster."

View the new documentary MOVE online at: <http://tinyurl.com/3265tf>

Hans Bennett (insubordination.blogspot.com) is a Philadelphia anarchist.



Autonomy

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the world. The discussions in papers, on the internet and in our movements has never been less static.

And in the spirit of things not static a small group has been discussing autonomous ideas at LAVA in West Philly. A discussion on autonomous communities at LAVA began what will hopefully become a series of rich and fruitful exchanges. Keep your eyes peeled for future get togethers! ■

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Children's Crusade

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French Philosopher and sociologist Michel Foucault wrote in his book *Discipline and Punish* that prisons are not created to end crime but rather as a sort of ant farm from which authorities can observe and control criminality. Faced with massive rebellions against the very institutions of private property during the 19th century, which Foucault describes as a sort of politicized criminality, the then authorities in Europe built the groundwork for the modern criminal justice system.

In his article, *Schools, Prisons, and Social Implications of Punishment: Rethinking Disciplinary Practices*, Pedro A. Noguera describes how the institutions of public education complement and enforce the institutions of penalization and social control.

As Noguera states, "Consistent with the way that we approach crime in society, the assumption is that safety and order can be achieved by removing "bad" individuals and keeping them away from others who are presumed to be "good" and law abiding. Not surprisingly, those most frequently targeted for punishment in school often look—in terms of race, gender, and socioeconomic status—a lot like smaller versions of the adults who are most likely to be targeted for incarceration in society (Singer, 1996)."

Through the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) these practices have been institutionalized.

The Sheep Hop the Fence

While such explanations of these social forces seem to portray students as pawns, inactive objects acted upon by these geological forces of poverty and dis-empowerment, this has not been the case.

Philadelphia Public school students have not behaved as mere sheep being lead to the slaughter. They have fought tooth and nail for their rights every step of the way.

During the Governorship of Tom Ridge, a radical overhaul of the Philadelphia Public School system was undertaken. A company called Edison—founded by Christopher Whittle, the creator of the advertisement laden educational TV station "Channel One"—that privatizes public school systems was contracted to advise reforms for the Philadelphia Public School system. Their recommendation was that Philadelphia public schools should be privatized by Edison, as described in an article in the *Nation* published at the time "...Edison was given \$2.7 million to produce a report on the state of the city's educational system. According to its critics, the report tacitly made the case for Edison's own management. Using the SAT, a test not typically invoked as a yardstick of the success of urban school districts, Edison claimed the schools had simply been mismanaged, without even mentioning the role of underfunding and urban divestment in creating the system's ills. "

Many were incensed by this. Students across Philadelphia created the Philadelphia Student

Union to organize against privatization and towards drastic reform of the ailing public school system.

Jacob Winterstein, then a highschool student attending a Magnate school in Philadelphia spoke with the defenestrator about his work against public school privatization at that time. He admitted that his education was above par, as he attended a school with selective admittance, with a bigger budget maintained by an attentive and active staff and parents groups.

Jacob described some highlights of the student resistance that he was present to witness. "We staged events at city council meetings, the state legislator, school board meetings, school reform commission meetings. We camped out in the CEO of the school districts office for the night and dropped a banner out of his window while hundreds of union members marched outside in the street. We shut down the streets while the governor of the time was trying to leave a press conference that we had infiltrated. We had hundreds of students, parents, and teachers make a human chain around the school district building to symbolize the [kind of] ownership we desired. The culminating event of the movement and of the year was when a group of students from the Philadelphia student union along with adult allies shut the school board building down using human chains. This was on the day they voted which schools would be handed over to for profit companies."

"The students have provided the spark for opposition," says Paul Socolar, editor of *Public School Notebook*, an independent quarterly newspaper about the schools. "The student actions have been the most visible and the loudest, and have had a real consistency." This sentiment was also mirrored by two employees of Harding Middle school of Philadelphia, a school administered by Edison, Nicole Aro and Lisa Haver.

Nicole, a teacher who worked in the Chicago Public School system while it was manged by Paul Vallas detailed some unsavory practices she witnessed at various schools both managed by Edison and not.

She explained how to reduce the "bottom line" (which Lisa Haver described as one of Vallas's favorite phrases) Edison bypassed the teachers union by subcontracting non-union labor. Non-Teaching-Aides (NTA'S) who provide an adult presence in schools, like a sort of unarmed security guard, were transferred every 59 days to prevent them from qualifying for health benefits they were entitled to after 60 days. Teachers were instructed to avoid reporting violence until after school hours. "Problem students" were suspended—essentially removed from school—rather than being given the attention they needed.

She described how, after a culmination of violent incidents, Harding was "locked down". Students were confined to the same classroom while teachers would rotate to teach different classes; students were required to walk single file in hallways. While she maintained that some of these measures helped to foster better discipline, they seem to not have solved the problem of school violence as she went on to state, "Paul Vallas has made sweeping

statements about controlling violence but nothing has happened."

Lisa Haver described the ill effects of the No Child Left Behind act: focusing too heavily on test scores as a measure of academic achievement, taking funding from needy schools, exacerbating existing problems and creating a slew of new ones. She states, "I was truly stunned a couple of years ago when Vallas went to Washington to testify before Congress in favor of NCLB."

The Blame Game

These two educational professionals seems to speak to the inadvisability of placing businessmen in charge of educating our children. It affirms the claims by Pedro Noguera that schools act to enforce structures of power and to enforce social control.

Noguera explains that disciplinary practices in public schools tend to merely ostracize and isolate the students most in need of special attention. It seems that in many ways, NCLB is merely a law institutionalizing these same processes. Now there is an official framework to not only exclude students that perform below standards, but to punish whole schools that fail to meet testing guidelines.

Lisa Haver asserted, in her interview that it is difficult to assign blame; Vallas cannot be blamed where the School Board is supposed to set policies. We cannot entirely blame one company or individual for destroying the Philly school system. Noguera states, there is not a conspiracy operating to destroy public education and stratify our society in the true sense. It seems that these inequities are programmed into our educational institutions. The pathologies in ailing school systems both mirror and contribute

broader socio-economic problems. It is hard to say which came first, but these problems are obviously so intertwined as to render such distinctions rather irrelevant. ■

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REBEL CALENDAR

Saturday, May 5th

Clark Park People's Flea Market, with free health screenings
Baltimore Ave. and 43rd St., West Philly

info: Deidre Martin, 215-387-0919 or
uhuru99@critpath.org

Wednesday, May 16th

Film Screening: Control Room
6:30pm at LAVA

Thursday, May 17th

ORAL ARGUMENTS SET FOR MAY 17!
THE START OF A CRITICAL STAGE IN
THE STRUGGLE FOR MUMIA'S LIFE
AND FREEDOM BEGINS ON MAY 17TH
IN PHILLY!

Monday, May 21st

Screening of the film Arna's Children
7:30pm at the A-Space

Saturday, May 19th

A-Space Open House
3pm at A-Space

Friday, May 25

Poems Not Prisons Open Mic featuring

Sam Barrow
7:30pm at the A-Space

Saturday, May 26

Jericho Movement Movie Night: COINTEL-
PRO films
6pm at A-Space

Monday, May 28th

Anarchist Perspectives Discussion
Group
7:30pm at A-Space

Thursday May 31

Bicycle short films at
Firehouse Bikes
benefit for defenestrator
prisoner mailing
7pm at 50th and Baltimore

Friday, June 1st

Mothership Connection at LAVA
Respect the Culture and Graffiti as Political
Expression presents a BBOY Jam &
Art Show
Featuring BBoy Ciphers and New Artists
Every month

10pm at LAVA

Wednesday, June 6

Afro Pick Benefit for the Human Rights
Coalition featuring McRad, Imani Uzuri
Rock Quartet & Purple Rhinestone Eagle
8pm at the Rotunda (4014 Walnut St.)

June 8- June 10

Prometheus Radio project
and the Malcolm X Grass-
roots Movement Barnrais-
ing in Greenville, South
Carolina
prometheusradio.org

Friday, June 8

SUSTAIN House Party
w/ DJ Alex Smith
8PM-late \$5
4707 Hazel Ave

Saturday, June 9th

Day of Solidarity with Jef-
frey "Free" Luers

Sunday June 10

Mobilization in Washington DC to End the
Israeli Occupation of Palestine
info: endtheoccupation.org

Saturday June 16

All Day: LAVA Open House
featuring hot performances and informa-
tion about LAVA groups. Great way to get
plugged in.

Wednesday, June 20th

GeoClan presents a screening of : "Drug
War Reality Tour"
6:30pm at LAVA

June 27 - July 1

United States Social Forum in Atlanta, GA
Another World is Possible - Another U.S.
is Necessary!
www.ussf2007.org

Thursday, June 28

Film screening at Firehouse Bikes: the
Wind That Shakes The Barley
benefit for defenestrator prison mailing

June 22-24

Allied Media Conference in Detroit
http://alliedmediaconference.org/

Thursday July 26

Film screening at Firehouse Bikes: sur-
realist night



ONGOING EVENTS AND MEETINGS

Food Not Bombs

In a country hungry for war, that bombs
countries hungry for food..

Rain or shine: Servings are Sundays at
5:00PM and Mondays at 7:00PM across
from the Free Library on Vine Street
between 19th and 20th Streets

In West Philly : sharings happen every
Wednesday @ 5pm-CEDAR PARK (50th
and Baltimore)

ACT UP

Weekly Meeting Every Monday from 6:00

pm - 9:00 pm St. Lukes Church; 330 S.
13th St. (between Pine & Spruce) Email:
actupphilly@critpath.org for more info.

Weekly Meeting of Phila. County Coalition on Prison Health Care

Every Tuesday from 9:30-10:30 a.m.
Philadelphia FIGHT office, 1233 Locust
St., 2nd floor, For info, contact Laura
McTigh: 215-380-5556

Books Through Bars

Packing Café Every Tuesday from
7:30 pm - 9:30 pm The A Space;

4722 Baltimore Ave. E-mail:
info@booksthroughbars.org for more info

International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia

Every Thursday from 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm
4601 Market St., 5th floor Phone: 215-
476- 5416 for more info.

Philadelphia Anti-War Forum

Meeting Third Sunday of every month
from 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm Aspace; 4722
Baltimore Ave and first Thurs. at Last
Drop Coffee. E-mail: clanarchy@prodigy.

net

INCITE! Radical Women of Color

Calling Radical Women of Color
Philly INCITE! Starting in December Philly
INCITE is meeting each 1st & 3rd
Thursday from 6:30-7:45pm at the A-
Space

PRAWN (Philadelphia Regional Anti- War Network)

Meets 1st Tues. at Local 4, AFSCME,
1606 Walnut.
6:30-9pm www.prawnworks.net

LIBERATED SPACES

LAVA

4134 Lancaster Ave- A conspiracy from the fanatics at
the defenestrator, the Philly Independent Media Centre,
Radio Volta, the deraileur collective, the Unconvention
and others comes this new project: a radical community
centre in the pancreas of West Philly. We bought a build-
ing, now we need your involvement! info: 215.387.6155 or
space@phillyimc.org * defenestrator.org/space

A-Space - a collectively run anarchist gallery and meet-
ing/community space. Events are free and generally start
at 7:30pm unless otherwise noted. Accessible by the 34
trolley. Plenty of parking for cars and bikes. They pass the
hat to cover rent.

4722 Baltimore Avenue Philadelphia, PA 19143
215.727.0882 a-space@defenestrator.org

WOODEN SHOE BOOKS and RECORDS - Anarchist
bookstore owned and run by an unpaid collective of
geniuses with nothing better to do than sit around talking
philosophy and riots. Carries a wide range of anarchist and

radical books, periodicals, pamphlets, T-shirts, patches,
CD's records etc.

508 S. Fifth Street Philadelphia, PA
215.413.0999 woodenshoe@rocketmail.com

Firehouse Bikes- A worker owned collective bike shop.
50th and Baltimore

The Divine Bicycle Church - Bike repair co-op at
Neighborhood Bike Works. Tools, advice and recycled parts
available. Every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday from 6:30-
9pm
40th and Locust Walk, behind St. Mary's Church

Crossroads Women's Center- open Tuesdays and
Thursdays 10am-2pm or by appointment
33 Maplewood Mall, Germantown 215-848-1120

The Friends Center - American Friends Service
Committee HQ. Contains meeting spaces and offices for a
gazillion different entities.

the defenestrator
PO Box 30922
Philadelphia, PA 19104

to:

TENBROECK 2007